

been, if you will, wasted or broken, and we'll be able to go forward.

Is that right?

Director James Lee Witt. Absolutely.

Q. Sir, do you see the—to the Republicans—[inaudible]—

The President. No, I think Americans, without regard to party, believe in aggressive disaster relief. I would hope they do. We've been through a 500-year flood in the Middle West, the big flooding in the Pacific Northwest, the earthquake, and all the terrible other problems that we had in California, the fires and the floodings. So just about every region of America has been touched in the last 4 years by some form of disaster or another, and I think we all understand our shared responsibilities there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters

September 9, 1996

The President. Is everybody in? Let me just say very briefly, it's a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu back to the White House; Mr. Gold; our new Ambassador from Israel, welcome, sir. I'm especially glad to have this chance to visit with him so soon after his historic meeting with Mr. Arafat, and I'm looking forward to getting a briefing on that and discussing the issues that are still outstanding.

All of you know the United States is still committed to peace and security, and I think we're making some progress in that direction. And I'm going to do whatever I can to advance it.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, when do you think you'll pull your occupation troops out of the Golan Heights and Lebanon?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, you didn't waste any time. [Laughter] First of all, let me say that I'm delighted to be here with

President Clinton and Vice President Gore and Secretary Christopher.

We've renewed our commitment to achieving peace with the Palestinians and with the Syrians. I think that we've been greatly assisted by President Clinton and his staff in resuming the negotiations with the Palestinians. It's not an easy road ahead, but it's one we're committed to, and we'll pursue it. And I went over the notes of the conversation that I had with President Clinton a few months ago here, and we've pretty much done what we set out to do, again, with the support—I think the very important support of the United States.

I hope to have the same kind of support as we seek to resume the peace talks with the Syrians. And in fact, we're enjoying American assistance, and so far we're awaiting the Syrian response.

Q. Where do both of you see the process going with, first, with the Palestinians, and with the Syrians?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Mr. President.

The President. Well, that's what we're going to talk about.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dore Gold, Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister; Israeli Ambassador to the United States Eliahu Ben-Elissar; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister John Bruton of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters

September 9, 1996

The President. I'm delighted to have the Taoiseach here today and a good day: The talks began again today. Senator Mitchell is over in Belfast, and I just want to talk to him about where we go from here.

Also, I want to note that Ireland is assuming the Presidency of the European Union, and we have a lot of common interests there, a lot of things we have to work on together, including our common interest in the world-

wide fight against narcotics trafficking, and so we'll have lots to talk about, and I'm glad to have you here, sir.

Prime Minister Bruton. Thanks very much, indeed. Well, the talks have gotten off to a very good start in Belfast today. Obviously, we'd like to see an IRA cease-fire, because as long as the threat of violence is there, the negotiations are not going to work as fully as they need to.

Also, I'll be awaiting the opportunity to talk to the President about European Union business. As the President has said, we need to cooperate to combat drug trafficking, and we also need, I think, more business cooperation between Europe and North America, and the United States in particular, and I have certain ideas I'll be putting forth to the President on that matter.

Peace Process in Northern Ireland

Q. Mr. President, at this point, do you really see any advance in the talks? I know they started in June, but it doesn't really seem like they've gone very far.

The President. I would go back to what the Prime Minister said; we'd like to see a cease-fire restored. But I think that actually, we do have a chance to make some progress in these talks, and that's one of the things we're going to talk about here.

We're always better off when they're talking than when they're not, and I can see circumstances under which we can make some real progress there if we got one or two good breaks, so we're going to keep working.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

The President. Let me just, first of all, welcome you all here and say that I am deeply honored, as always, to have the *Taoiseach* here, coming especially as he does today as the talks have opened again in Belfast. I'm looking forward to hearing his ideas about where we go from here and any suggestions he has about how the United States can help.

I also want to talk about the work we can do together as Ireland assumes the Presidency of the European Union on international narcotics trafficking and any number of other issues. I have a very, very high regard for the Prime Minister for his leadership for

what he has tried to do for the cause of peace in Northern Ireland, and I'm really looking forward to having this chance to visit with him.

Prime Minister Bruton. Thank you very much. Obviously, I'll be updating the President on the talks in Belfast, which have gotten off to a very good start today. It's important that they should move as quickly as possible to discussing the substantial issues that they were set up to deal with, having dealt with the procedure and questions, which are very important but which I think can be dealt with quite quickly at this point.

Also, I will be talking to the President in my capacity as President of the European Union and putting forward some ideas to him on closer business cooperation across the North Atlantic. And I will also be anxious to bring to agreement proposals that are in discussion about closer cooperation to combat the international drugs trade, both in the Caribbean area and in regard to what are known as precursors, which are chemicals which are used in the manufacture of drugs. I think we need cooperation between the European Union and the United States if we're to combat this menace at its source.

Peace Process in Northern Ireland

Q. Mr. President, if I may ask you, sir, Mike McCurry told us today that you chose to be optimistic about the prospects for peace. Can you tell us how you can possibly be optimistic at the moment and how optimistic you might be, for instance, of a new IRA cease-fire?

The President. Well, I want to talk to the Prime Minister about that. I think there should be a restoration of the cease-fire so that everyone who needs to be in the talks can be a part of them. But the thing that makes me optimistic is the clear interest that the people, all the people in Northern Ireland, have in a successful resolution of this and their evident desire for it, which I saw so clearly last year.

And of course, unfortunately the people have already paid a price this year in the fact that when the cease-fire was lost and things seemed to be drifting in the wrong direction, it was costly in terms of tourists, in terms of business investment.

So I just believe that we're still on the right side of history, and I can also see the development of events in a way that would make it possible for us to make some real progress. But they're just beginning. I have a lot of confidence in Senator Mitchell and the team there, but mostly I believe the people of Northern Ireland want peace, and I think the determination of the Irish Government and also the British Government, Prime Minister Major's government, to try to work to create conditions in which peace can be developed, I think those things make me optimistic.

Prime Minister Bruton. I'd like to add, if I may, that I think it's very important that we do have an IRA cease-fire, because we're not going to have a truly heartfelt and enduring agreement as long as the threat of violence continues.

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that the loyalist parties should now be excluded from the talks process, as demanded by Dr. Paisley today?

The President. I can't say that. I think that the only position I've taken on this whole thing is that the cease-fire ought to be restored for full participation of all of the parties. I don't want to get into that.

I think that the people who are there on the ground are perfectly capable of making their decisions. I think on balance, what we want is the largest number of people possible who will be affected by this in the end participating, and I think that that's what we should look for. But I don't think—

Q. Do you anticipate going back to Ireland, Mr. President, in December?

Q. Mr. President, will you make the golf match with Dick Spring this time?

The President. I'll do my very best. Only an intervening circumstance stopped me last time. I hope I can come back and do it. He wants the privilege of beating me on the home soil, and I suppose I'll have to let him do that someday.

Q. Are you definitely coming to Dublin in December?

The President. I don't know yet.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Ian Paisley, leader, Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland; and Deputy Prime Minister Richard Spring of Ireland.

A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 6915—America Goes Back to School, 1996

September 9, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education is the foundation of our economy and society as we stand at the dawn of the 21st century. Education provides every American with the tools to make the most of their own lives and to seize the tremendous opportunities of economic growth and change. Education also passes along to our young people the most fundamental American values: family, responsibility, and community. To make the next century another American century—and to help all of our communities to become prosperous and strong—more parents and community members must become involved in improving our local schools and colleges. Better education is everybody's business. When families, educators, and communities work together, we can truly build a bridge to a better, stronger 21st century.

The American people want the best for their children. Our schools should be safe, disciplined, and drug-free environments where parents are involved and children can learn. Our educators and administrators should continue to aim for the highest standards of academic excellence and professional accountability. Together we must rebuild the Nation's schools for the 21st century. We must make the investments needed to allow our children to learn about the computers and technology that are the building blocks of the future. We must make college more accessible. We must expand public school choice and competition. And we must make it easier to move from school to work.

Children are our greatest natural resource: Although they are only 20 percent of our population, they are 100 percent of our future. From safe schools to better training for our teachers, from raising standards in our schools to increasing financial aid for college for middle-income and working families,